

“The Sikh religion teaches that life continues after death in the soul, and not the physical body. The last act of giving and helping others through organ donation is both consistent with and in the spirit of Sikh teachings.”

Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, UK (endorsed by Sikh Authorities in Amritsar, Punjab)

The Sikh faith stresses the importance of performing noble deeds. There are many examples of selfless giving and sacrifice in Sikh teachings by the ten Gurus and other Sikh:

“Guru Har Krishen, our eighth Guru, gave his life helping sufferers during a smallpox epidemic. It is entirely consistent with his spirit of service that we consider donating organs after death to give life and hope to others... In my family we all carry donor cards and would encourage all Sikhs to do so.”

Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, Director, Network of Sikh Organisations, UK

Donating one's organ to another so that the person may live is one of the greatest gifts and ultimate seva to human kind and hence Satguru says:

“Through selfless service, eternal peace is obtained. The Gurumukhi is absorbed in intuitive peace.”

Guru Granth Sahib

“Donation without reward is one of the characteristics of a Guru's Sikhs. The life of Gurumukhi is useful because by their natural temperament they are donors. And why not donate an organ so another can live?”

Dr Jasdev Rai, British Sikh Consultative Forum (BSCF)

The Guru Granth further says:

“Through virtuous deeds, the dead establish a bond with the living.”

This leaflet had been developed with the input of the Network of Sikh Organisations and contributions from British Sikh Consultative Forum. More information on Sikhism is available from: www.nsouk.co.uk and www.bscf.org



How do I become a donor?

If you decide you would like to become a donor on your death, you need to join the NHS Organ Donor Register to ensure your wishes are recorded. Discuss your decision with those closest to you so that they are aware of your wishes. Adding your name to the register is simple and quick:

You can register online at organdonationni.info

Or call **0300 123 23 23**

To find out more about organ and tissue donation, visit organdonationni.info

Organ donation and religious beliefs

A guide to organ donation and Sikh beliefs

Sikhism and organ donation

Organ donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone else who needs a transplant. Hundreds of people's lives are saved or improved each year by organ transplants.

Organs that can be donated by people who have died include the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas and small bowel. Tissue such as heart valves and corneas can also be used to help others.

Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups.

Why is it important to think about donating organs?

With medical advances it is now possible to use transplanted organs and tissues to enhance the life chances of those suffering from a range of terminal conditions such as renal, liver and heart failure. More people than before now suffer from these conditions and some ethnic groups seem to be more affected than others.

The person in need of an organ today may be a stranger, but tomorrow that person could be someone you know and love dearly. So please take the time to think about becoming an organ

donor and discuss your thoughts with loved ones.

Consent

The consent or permission of those closest to the potential donor is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important to discuss your wishes with your loved ones should you decide to become a donor. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loss.

When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and their colleagues are committed to doing everything possible to save life. Organs are only removed for transplantation once all attempts to save life have failed and after death has been certified by doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Most donated organs in the UK come from people who die from a severe brain injury, and who are on a ventilator in an Intensive Care Unit. The brain injury will have damaged the vital centres in the brain stem which are essential to maintain life. Doctors call this 'brain stem death'. This is not the same as

being in a coma or 'persistent vegetative state'. Tests are carried out to strict guidelines to show conclusively when this has happened. When brain stem death is pronounced the patient may still be on a ventilator, and have a heart beat which continues to circulate blood around the body. This prevents the organs from losing the oxygen-rich blood supply which is necessary for a healthier transplanted outcome.

Organs can also be donated from people whose death has been certified because their heart has stopped. Certification in these 'non-heart beating' donors is also by doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Care and respect

The removal of organs and tissues is carried out with the greatest care and respect. The family can see the body afterwards and staff can contact a chaplain or local religious leader if the family wishes.

Sikhism and organ donation

The Sikh philosophy and teachings place great emphasis on the importance of giving and putting others before oneself:

"Where self exists, there is no God. Where God exists, there is no self."

Guru Nanak (founder of Sikh faith, and first of ten Gurus), Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Holy Scripture)

Sikh Gurus devoted their lives for the benefit of humanity and some even sacrificed their lives looking after the welfare of others. The Guru Granth Sahib says:

"Within this world take the opportunity for selfless service to others; then in divine abode we get the chance to be," says Nanak. **"The Eternal will embrace you."**

Seva or selfless service is at the core of being a Sikh: to give without seeking reward or recognition and know that all seva is known to and appreciated by the Eternal. Seva can also be donation of one's organ to another. There are no taboos attached to organ donation in Sikhi nor is there a requirement that a body should have all its organs intact at or after death. According to Sikhi the soul migrates in a perpetual cycle of rebirth but the physical body is only a vassal in its long journey, left behind each time and dissolved into the elements, as the Guru Granth Sahib says in Asaa Mahala 5:

"That time, which the mortal does not wish for, eventually comes. Without the Eternal's order the understanding of mortality is never understood. The body is consumed by water, fire and earth. But the soul is neither young nor old, O human, thus it is the soul and not the body which continues its journey."

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